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ABSTRACT

This 1987-1988 study was conducted to determine how full-day kindergarten was received in the school district of Philadelphia and to identify strengths and weaknesses of the program. Assessed were principals' and teachers' perceptions of the full-day program, the demand for it, and available space. Principals and teachers viewed full-day kindergarten as one of the most positive initiatives the school district had undertaken. They indicated that, with full-day kindergarten: (1) children were exposed to a more comprehensive program, with a greater richness of experience; (2) teachers had more time to identify the needs of each child and reinforce concepts taught; and (3) children appeared more self-confident and better able to work at grade level. Problems included inadequate aide service, scheduling difficulties, children's restlessness in the afternoon, shortage of supplies and equipment, space problems, the need to revise report cards, and difficulties in generating parent involvement. Districts differed in the percentage of staff who were experienced teachers. About 11 percent of the children who applied for the program could not be accommodated, and were put on waiting lists. (Author/RH)

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INTERIM REPORT OF FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

1987-1988

REPORT NO. 8834

APRIL 1988

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April 1988

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Principals and teachers of full-day kindergarten sites (N=63) were surveyed. Returns were received from 50 principals and 133 (of 164) teachers.

Both principals and teachers viewed full-day kindergarten as one of the most positive initiatives the School District has undertaken. They indicated that:

i) children were exposed to a more comprehensive program, with a richness of experiences,

ii) teachers had more time to identify the needs of each child, and reinforce concepts taught,

iii) children appeared more self-confident and more able to work on grade level.

Problems identified by both principals and teachers included: inadequate aide service; scheduling difficulties; the fact that children were restless in the afternoon and needed a nap; a shortage of supplies and equipment, and, in some cases, space problems; the need to revise report cards, and difficulties generating parent involvement.

With regard to teaching experience, the majority of teachers (78%) had over 10 years of general teaching experience, while 7% were beginning teachers. Districts 4 and 1 had the highest percentage (45% and 35% respectively) of teachers who were relatively new to kindergarten, while District 8 had the highest percentage (83%) of teachers who had more than 10 years of kindergarten experience.

According to the schools surveyed, approximately 11% of the children who applied for full-day kindergarten could not be accommodated, and are on waiting lists.

THE MAJOR PURPOSE OF THE INQUIRY

The major purpose of this 1987-1988 study was to determine in a timely fashion how full-day kindergarten is being received in the School District, and to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the program.

The following areas were the main focus of the inquiry:

- to assess principal perceptions of full-day kindergarten (questionnaire)
- to assess teacher perceptions of full-day kindergarten (questionnaire)
- to assess the demand for full-day kindergarten and available space (by means of a telephone survey)

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HOW WAS THE INFORMATION COLLECTED?

- Questionnaires were mailed to all principals and teachers in the 63 schools with full-day kindergarten in the 1987-1988 school year

- Returns were received from 50 principals and 133 (of 164) teachers.

- A telephone survey was conducted where principals were asked about space problems, number of applicants to full-day kindergarten and numbers on a waiting list.

RESEARCH QUESTION ONE

HOW DID PRINCIPALS VIEW FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN?

Principals were extremely positive about full-day kindergarten and viewed it as an asset to their schools and to the school system. Due to the additional time available, principals felt that:

- children could be exposed to a comprehensive program which teaches all curriculum areas fully, and allows for the integration of the curriculum
- children were exposed to a richness of experiences
- children had more time to acquire readiness skills
- teachers had time to reinforce concepts taught and remediate skill deficits
- teachers could proceed at a more leisurely, less-rushed pace
- teachers were able to get to know each child better, and address the needs of each child
- early identification of problems was possible
- children appeared more self-confident, articulate, more mature, and more able to develop social skills
- more children were able to work on grade level

RESEARCH QUESTION TWO

HOW DID PRINCIPALS RATE FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN?

Percentage of Principals Who Indicated That Full-Day Kindergarten Provided Time for the Items Listed
N=50

Item	RATING SCALE: To a Very Great Extent 5	4	3	2	Not At All 1
	%	%	%	%	%
implement the curriculum	82	18	0	0	0
elaborate on some curricular areas	78	18	4	0	0
understand each child	76	18	6	0	0
diagnose serious problems	72	18	10	0	0
integrate cognitive skills	74	18	8	0	0
further develop motor skills	78	18	4	0	0
further develop socialization skills	76	16	8	0	0
plan a wide variety of experiences	76	14	8	0	0
motivate children to attend regularly	70	18	8	4	0
establish effective parent involvement	44	14	16	8	6

Comments:

- The overwhelming majority of principals rated full-day kindergarten as facilitating "to a great extent" (a rating of 5 or 4) all of the areas identified on the questionnaire.

- The one area that appears to be somewhat problematic is establishing effective parent involvement.

RESEARCH QUESTION THREE

WHAT PROBLEMS DID PRINCIPALS IDENTIFY IN FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN?

. aide service not adequate

. additional support needed to generate parent involvement

. inadequate space and supervision for lunch

. long day for younger children

. children need rest period in the afternoon

. shortage of supplies and equipment

. scheduling logistics and lunch program

. prep periods should be in the afternoon

. report cards inadequate

RESEARCH QUESTION FOUR

HOW DID TEACHERS VIEW FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN?

Teachers were very positive about full-day kindergarten and many recommended that it be instituted citywide. The positive aspects that teachers repeatedly mentioned were:

- time to implement the curriculum
- the ability to plan a wider variety of experiences
- time to integrate the curriculum
- time to review concepts and remediate
- a more relaxed learning atmosphere
- a greater opportunity to get to know and understand each child individually
- further opportunity to develop socialization skills, as well as motor and cognitive skills
- improved attendance
- children were observed as learning the material more quickly and thoroughly

RESEARCH QUESTION FIVE

HOW DID TEACHERS RATE FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN?

Percentage of Teachers Who Indicated That Full-Day Kindergarten Provided Time for the Items Listed
N=133

Item	RATING SCALE To a Very Great Extent 5 %	4 %	3 %	2 %	Not At All 1 %
implement the curriculum	68	26	5	0	0
elaborate on some curricular areas	59	32	6	2	0
understand each child	57	31	10	2	1
diagnose serious problems	59	26	10	2	3
integrate cognitive skills	62	32	6	0	0
further develop motor skills	57	32	8	2	1
further develop socialization skills	63	28	8	0	1
plan a wide variety of experiences	71	19	8	2	0
motivate children to attend regularly	59	21	16	2	3
establish effective parent involvement	25	15	32	17	12

Comments:

- The overwhelming majority of teachers rated full-day kindergarten as facilitating "to a great extent" (a rating of 5 or 4) nine of the ten areas identified.
- The one area which appears to be problematic is establishing effective parent involvement.

RESEARCH QUESTION SIX

WHAT PROBLEMS DID TEACHERS IDENTIFY IN FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN?

. need full-time aides

. children are restless in the afternoon and need a nap

. kindergarten teachers need common time to meet

. scheduling problems, e.g., lunch either too early or too late

. prep time should be in afternoon

. inadequate space, equipment or materials

. lunch in the classroom creates problems

. need smaller class size

. entering age too young

. curriculum too structured

. report card needs to be revised

. snacks needed

RESEARCH QUESTION SEVEN

HOW MUCH TEACHING EXPERIENCE DID FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS HAVE?

PERCENTAGE OF KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS WITH VARYING
YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE
1987-1988

	Years of Teaching Experience					Years of Kindergarten Experience				
District	N	0-2	3-10	10+-20	20+	N	0-2	3-10	10+-20	20+
		%	%	%	%		%	%	%	%
1	23	4	22	52	22	23	35	26	30	9
2	21	10	14	62	14	21	29	38	24	10
4	24	8	17	58	17	20	45	21	15	15
5	5	0	0	60	40	5	0	40	40	20
6	11	9	9	83	36	9	11	22	45	11
7	12	17	25	42	17	9	22	33	22	22
8	19	0	5	37	58	18	0	17	50	33
1-8	115	7	15	51	27	105	25	28	32	16

Comments:

- The majority of full-day K teachers (78%) had over 10 years of general teaching experience.
- Seven percent (7%) of the full-day K teachers were beginning teachers (0-2 years of experience.)
- Twenty-five percent (25%) of the full-day K teachers were relatively new at teaching kindergarten (0-2 years of experience).
- District 4 had the highest percentage (45%) of teachers who were relatively new to kindergarten (0-2 years of experience).
- District 8 had the highest percentage (83%) of teachers who had more than 10 years of kindergarten experience.

RESEARCH QUESTION EIGHT

WAS THE SCHOOL DISTRICT ABLE TO ACCOMMODATE ALL THE APPLICANTS FOR FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN?

Trends:

- there were approximately 4,510 applicants for full-day kindergarten in the 57 (of the 63) schools reached by telephone

- the waiting lists at these schools totaled approximately 506 children, i.e., 11% of the applicants could not be accommodated

- approximately 414 children (9%) applied from outside the school boundaries

- 39 of the 57 schools indicated that they had no problems with regard to physical space

- 7 of the 57 schools indicated that room size limited the number of children they could accommodate in compliance with state regulations

- 11 of the 57 schools indicated that they either had to dislodge other classes; do without a music room; take back the teacher's lounge; or float prep teachers in order to free up space

- 20 schools indicated that the number of kindergarten applicants had increased since full-day kindergarten had been installed in their school